

# re-bound

creating handmade books from **recycled** and **repurposed** materials



Q U A R R Y

JEANNINE STEIN

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BEVERLY MASSACHUSETTS

QUARRY  
BOOKS



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## INTRODUCTION

Making a book is one of the most satisfying artistic pursuits. Books offer limitless possibilities—they can be functional, sculptural, or both. From concept to design to construction, each step offers challenges and opportunities.

Most functional handmade books—journals and photo albums—are made from some combination of book board, paper, bookcloth, and leather. In over a decade of creating books out of these materials, I've never tired of learning new techniques and perfecting old ones.

But book artists are always looking for more. After years of using traditional elements, I found myself inspired by unorthodox items—nineteenth-century photographs, rusty hardware, textiles, roof flashing, and cracker boxes. I was excited at the prospect of working with unconventional materials, and I discovered a different kind of satisfaction in taking an item intended for a specific function and recycling it into a one-of-a-kind book.

A recycled book's theme or function can match the materials—or not. An empty pasta box could house recipes, or bingo cards could become a baby book. There are no rules or limits.

An added bonus to using recycled materials is that it's eco-friendly and keeps trash out of landfills. It also reminds us that although we live in a throwaway culture, things can, and should, be repurposed whenever possible to live another life.





The projects in this book incorporate a wide variety of materials that, while familiar, may not be in every book artist's repertoire. For those who have made books before, I encourage you to embrace potato-chip bags and window screens and take your artistry to a new level.

For those who are venturing into completely new territory, this is a great way to start making books. Materials are as close as your kitchen cabinet, and the basic tools needed are few and inexpensive.

Also use these projects as inspiration for further endeavors. Devise creative challenges with yourself and friends to see what kinds of books can be made from automotive supplies, toys, or old clothes.

So dive in. Any day you can make a book is a good day.

*Jeannine Stein*





## CHAPTER 1

# Getting Started

Making books out of recycled and repurposed materials is venturing into fun, yet uncharted territory. Hot-water bottles, paint samples, and bathroom rugs are hardly the typical stuff of which books are made, but with a little guidance and a few tips, they can become stunning, one-of-a-kind journals and albums.





**Unfamiliar materials** present creative challenges that start ideas flowing. The best way to start working with new supplies is to handle them and see what they can do. Can they flex enough to wrap around a text block? Are they easily cut with a craft or utility knife? Which adhesives work best? Does an object lose or gain appeal if it's pared down? Potato-chip bags, for example, don't suffer at all when cropped, since their bold, iconic images are so easily recognizable. Set aside time to experiment.

Some materials may need shoring up before they reach book status. Extremely lightweight items such as potato-chip bags can be reinforced with Tyvek, a high-density polyethylene that's used for home building and overnight shipping envelopes. Fabric gains heft by fusing it to interfacing. Even brown paper grocery bags make sturdy linings.

Bindings add another exciting element to books. Most traditional bindings can be applied to recycled items—cabinet cards are made of chipboard, so they can be bound with a simple accordion structure or a link stitch. But don't stop there—recycled items also lend themselves to developing new bindings. Take advantage of elements such as metal mesh and rubber to produce innovative stitching patterns.







# Parts of a Book

Bookbinding has its own terminology, and it helps to know the anatomy of a book:

**Head:** Top of the book

**Tail:** Bottom of the book

**Spine:** Edge where signatures are sewn or pages are bound; may be open or closed

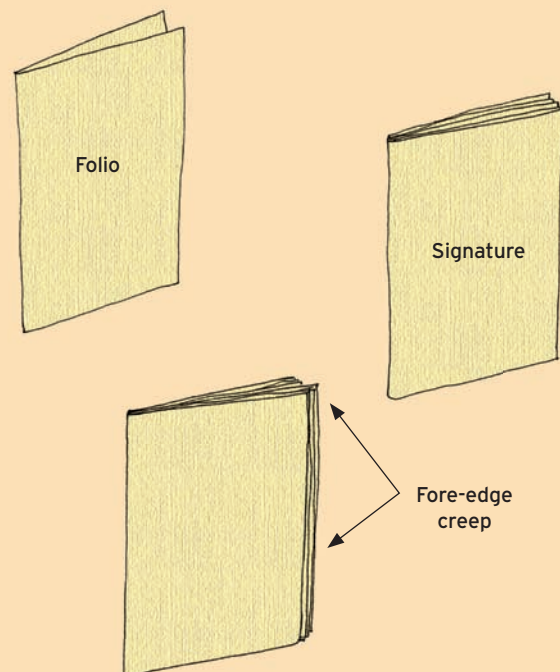
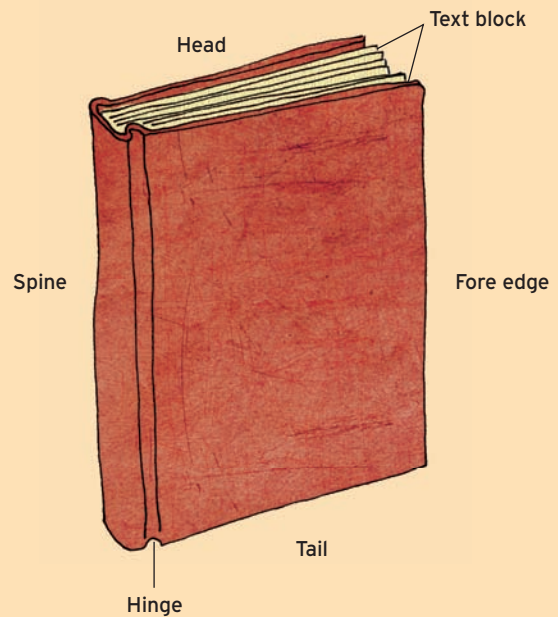
**Fore edge:** Where pages open

**Hinge:** Material that connects parts of the cover so the book can open

**Text block:** Inside pages of the book

**Folio:** Single piece of folded paper

**Signature:** Several folios nested together. Nesting several folios causes the fore edge to push out; this is called the fore-edge creep, or just creep. The heavier the paper, the bigger the creep will be. The creep can be left as is as a mark of a handmade book, trimmed off with a heavy-duty paper cutter, or removed by holding a metal ruler firmly on top of the signature and slicing off the edges with a craft or utility knife. The creep is important to keep in mind when measuring a book because it will add to the signature's width.



# Tools

## CUTTING TOOLS

A craft knife is best for making straight, clean cuts on paper and cardstock. Heavier materials require a utility knife, which has a stronger blade, and is best for chipboard, heavier weight book board, and even some lightweight metal. Replace blades at the first sign of dulling.

Scissors are handy for almost every project, and a small pair is perfect for detail work. Teflon-coated scissors are nonstick and good for cutting tape.

Rotary cutters create clean, straight lines on fabric and leather and are used in combination with a quilting ruler and cutting mat. A cutting mat is also essential when trimming with a craft knife or utility blade, since it protects the surface underneath and allows for clean cuts. Cutting paper and cardstock into smaller pieces can be done with a paper trimmer, found at office supply, art, and craft stores. The paper may also be cut by hand, using a craft knife and a metal ruler. To measure the size needed, make two marks at the top and bottom of the paper and line up the metal ruler with the marks, and then cut. Use this hand-cutting method to cut larger pieces of paper that won't fit inside a paper trimmer.

For projects requiring several pieces, label each piece as it is cut by marking lightly with a pencil, or by writing on a piece of repositionable tape and affixing it to the piece.

## NEEDLES AND THREAD

Needles made specifically for binding books have slightly blunted points, but darning needles found in fabric stores work just as well. Look for needles with eyes that can accommodate waxed linen thread, but are thin enough to go through small signature holes. Tapestry needles have blunted points and larger eyes that can accommodate wider ribbons and hemp cord.

Waxed linen thread in standard 4-cord size is used for most projects in this book; it's extremely strong and comes in a variety of colors. Other materials suitable for binding include unwaxed linen thread, strong woven ribbon, and hemp cord. Other threads can be used, but test for strength by pulling; if it breaks or stretches, don't use it.

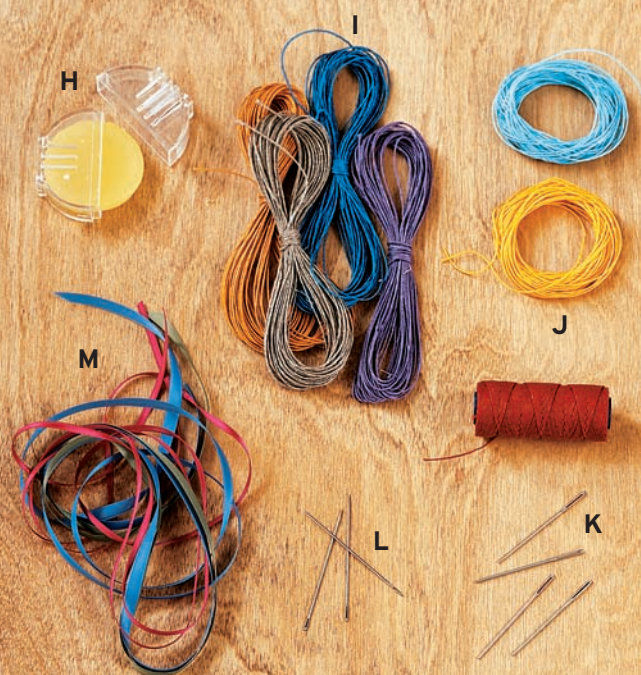
Coat unwaxed threads such as hemp cord with beeswax so they'll slide easily through signatures and covers and to help get the kinks out. Pull thread through the wax two or three times before sewing.

## AWLS AND DRILLS

Use awls for punching holes in signatures and covers. Heavy-duty awls, found in hardware stores, can punch larger holes in paper, board, and fabric. Hand drills quickly make uniform and neat holes. Use an "anywhere" punch with a hammer to punch holes in cardstock or heavy book board.

► **Top:** **A**, scissors; **B**, craft knife; **C**, utility knife; **D**, small detail scissors; **E**, nonstick small detail scissors; **F**, rotary cutter; **G**, cutting mat  
**Bottom left:** **H**, beeswax; **I**, hemp cord; **J**, waxed linen thread in various colors (blue, yellow, red); **K**, tapestry needles; **L**, binding needles; **M**, ribbon. **Bottom right:** **N**, sturdy awl; **O**, lightweight awl; **P**, rotary hand drill; **Q**, heavy-duty awl; **R**, hammer; **S**, "anywhere" punch.







### BONE FOLDER AND ADHESIVES

Bone folders are indispensable tools that make neat, flat creases and smooth paper after gluing. They can be made out of bone or plastic.

PVA, or polyvinyl acetate, is the preferred glue for bookbinding. It's archival, is non-yellowing, and won't crack with age. Archival glue sticks are best for quick, small jobs. Thick craft glue adheres fabric and small dimensional embellishments. Strong, double-stick tape works in small areas for paper and some low-profile embellishments. Low-tack, repositionable tape temporarily adheres templates or patterns.

Choose good-quality brushes with dense, tight bristles for applying glue. A foam brush can be used, but it soaks up glue, making it difficult to determine how much is in the brush.

### RULERS

Metal-edge rulers in 12" and 18" (30.5 cm and 45.7 cm) lengths are best for measuring and cutting; hold the ruler firmly and cut directly against the edge with a craft or utility knife. Heavier materials may require several passes to cut all the way through. Cork-backed metal rulers prevent slipping, but knife blades may get caught in the gap created by the cork, resulting in imperfect cuts. It's better to back a metal ruler with 300-grit sandpaper; glue the sandpaper with PVA and press until dry.

### TOOL UPGRADES

These tools are more expensive, but often worth the cost.

- Electric or battery-powered hand drill: A quick, efficient way to make holes in thick book board, wood, and metal.
- Japanese screw punch: Creates holes of various sizes anywhere in paper, cardstock, or book board. The smooth ratchet drill requires little effort.
- Teflon bone folder: Won't leave marks while smoothing paper or book cloth.

#### Basic Tool Kit

A bookbinder's basic tool kit should include the following items. Always keep these tools close by when making a book—they're essential and will be used in some combination in every project.

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| ▪ craft knife   | ▪ metal ruler |
| ▪ utility knife | ▪ cutting mat |
| ▪ bone folder   | ▪ glue brush  |
| ▪ awl           | ▪ needles     |
| ▪ scissors      | ▪ pencil      |
|                 | ▪ eraser      |

► **Top left:** **A**, PVA; **B**, thick craft glue; **C**, glue stick; **D**, low-tack repositionable tape; **E**, bone folder; **F**, double-stick tape; **G**, foam brush; **H**, standard glue brush. **Top right:** **I**, 18" metal ruler; **J**, 12" metal ruler backed with sandpaper. **Bottom:** **K**, electric hand drill; **L**, Japanese screw punch with tips; **M**, Teflon bone folder.







# Guidelines

These tips will be useful with almost every project, and with practice, the techniques will eventually become second nature.

## PAPER GRAIN

All machine-made paper has a grain, which refers to the direction in which the paper fibers line up during manufacturing. When buying reams of machine-made paper, the grain direction will be printed on the package as grain short, or GS (grain runs along the paper's short side), or grain long, or GL (grain runs along the paper's long side).

Grain is important when folding paper—fold with the grain for a smooth crease. Folding against the grain breaks the paper fibers and results in a bumpy crease, which may eventually tear. When folding paper for signatures or when making an accordion fold, always fold with the grain. Grain direction is given for projects in this book when appropriate.

To determine grain direction, hold two sides of a piece of paper in both hands and bend it slightly. Hold the other two sides and bend it again. The direction offering the least resistance is the grain direction.

Grain direction may be difficult or impossible to establish when working with recycled materials. Make judgments based on the book's structure and purpose, testing the materials whenever possible.

► Cabinet-card Sketchbook with stab binding, page 45



## SCORING

Scoring prepares paper to be folded—especially heavy-weight paper or cardstock—and creates cleaner folds. Mark the score line at the paper edges, and then align a metal-edge ruler with the marks as a guide. Impress or deboss a line into the paper with the pointed end of a bone folder, an empty ballpoint pen, or a scoring tool (a wood or plastic handle with a small metal ball on the end) held against the ruler. Don't press too hard or the paper may tear. Fold along the score line.

## SEWING

Prepare the signatures before binding the book together. The pages, or folios, are folded and nested together to form each signature. A signature-punching template is then used to mark where the holes are to be punched in the folded paper to allow for easy sewing. Slip the template into the center of a signature, open the signature at 45 degrees, hold the awl parallel to the table, and punch straight through, making sure you come out exactly on the crease (**A**). For multiple signatures, remove the template and repeat. Check every few signatures to make sure the holes are aligned.

If signatures are being sewn directly to the spine, the holes on the spine-punching template must match the holes on the signature-punching template.

Signatures can be sewn in various ways using a single thread strand. Each stitch offers a distinct look and determines how the book will open, whether completely flat, or with pages and covers that bend back. Different bindings will be covered in each project. When designing a book, consider the book's style and function when determining which type of binding and stitches to use.